

# Itonama language

**Itonama** is a moribund language isolate spoken by the Itonama people in the Amazonian lowlands of north-eastern Bolivia. Greenberg's (1987) classification of Itonama as Paezan, a sub-branch of Macro-Chibchan, remains unsupported and Itonama continues to be considered an isolate or unclassified language.

It was spoken on the Itonomas River and Lake<sup>[3]</sup> in Beni Department.

Itonama	
Native to	Bolivia
Region	Beni Department
Ethnicity	2,900 (2006) <sup>[1]</sup>
Native speakers	5 (2007) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	Language isolate
Writing system	Latin
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	ito
Glottolog	iton1250 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/iton1250">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/iton1250</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

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## Language contact

Jolkesky (2016) notes that there are lexical similarities with the Nambikwaran languages due to contact.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Phonology

### Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i	ɨ	u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Diphthongs: /ai au/.

### Consonants

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	Plain	p	t		tj	k	?
	Ejective		t'			k'	
	Voiced	b	d				
Affricate	Plain			tʃ			
	Ejective			tʃ'			
Fricative			s				h
Nasal	m	n					
Lateral		l					
Flap		r					
Semivowel	w				j		

The postalveolar affricates /tʃ tʃ' / have alveolar allophones [ts ts' ]. Variation occurs between speakers, and even within the speech of a single person.

The semivowel /w/ is realized as a bilabial fricative [β] when preceded and followed by identical vowels.

## Morphology

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Itonama is a polysynthetic, head-marking, verb-initial language with an accusative alignment system along with an inverse subsystem in independent clauses, and straightforward accusative alignment in dependent clauses.

Nominal morphology lacks case declension and adpositions and so is simpler than verbal morphology (which has body-part and location incorporation, directionals, evidentials, verbal classifiers, among others).<sup>[5]</sup>

## Vocabulary

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Loukotka (1968) lists the following basic vocabulary items for Itonama.<sup>[3]</sup>

<b>gloss</b>	<b>Itonama</b>
one	chash-káni
two	chash-chupa
tooth	huomóte
tongue	páchosníla
hand	mapára
woman	ubíka
water	huanúhue
fire	ubári
moon	chakakáshka
maize	udáme
jaguar	ótgu
house	úku

## See also

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- [Llanos de Moxos \(archaeology\)](#)
- [Macro-Paesan languages](#)

## Further reading

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- Camp, E. L.; Liccardi, M. R. (1967). Itonama, castellano e inglés. (Vocabularios Bolivianos, 6.) Riberalta: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

## References

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1. Itonama (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/ito/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Itonama" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/iton1250>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Loukotka, Čestmír (1968). *Classification of South American Indian languages* (<https://archive.org/details/classificationof0007louk>). Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center.
4. Jolkesky, Marcelo Pinho de Valhery (2016). *Estudo arqueo-ecolinguístico das terras tropicais sul-americanas* (<http://www.etnolinguistica.org/tese:jolkesky-2016-arqueoecolinguistica>) (Ph.D. dissertation) (2 ed.). Brasília: University of Brasília.
5. Crevels, M. *Who did what to whom in Magdalena*. p. 3.

- Crevels, Mily (2002). "Itonama o *Sihnipadara*, Lengua no clasificada de la Amazonía Boliviana" ([http://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/6200/1/EL\\_16\\_01.pdf](http://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/6200/1/EL_16_01.pdf)) (PDF). *Estudios de Lingüística* (in Spanish). **16**.

## External links

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- [Sample of Itonama fragment](#) (<http://www.language-museum.com/encyclopedia/i/itonama.php>)
- [Lenguas de Bolivia](#) (<http://www.ru.nl/lenguasdebolivia/>) (online edition)

- [Itonama](https://ids.clld.org/contributions/284) (<https://ids.clld.org/contributions/284>) (Intercontinental Dictionary Series)

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